

McMURTRY

Irish Origins of CF 203

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The following examines the Irish origins of the McMurtry family (CF 203), which settled on land near the village of South March, in the township of March, Carleton County, Upper Canada, along the Ottawa River, in what is commonly referred to as the Ottawa Valley.

James McMurtry (1794-1879) and wife Nancy (nee Wilson) McMurtry (1793-1874) were married in Ireland before settling in South March in 1823, the year March Township was established. John Benjamin McMurtry, their first child, was born that same year.

DNA tests conducted in 2005 revealed that James McMurtry's family matches 24 out of 25 markers with the family of Alexander McMurtry (CF 211) who was born in 1780. According to the testing firm, Family Tree DNA, these two families are definitely related and "the probability of a close relationship is very high." In fact, a 24/25 match means there is 99% likelihood the families share a common ancestor in a genealogical time frame.

Alexander McMurtry was from the parish of Artrea (Ardtrea / Ardtragh) in Co. Derry, which is an interesting parish in that it's located partly in the barony of Dungannon, county of Tyrone, and partly in the barony of Loughinsholin, county of Derry, both counties being in the province of Ulster. The majority of the parish is in Co. Derry along the shores of Lough Neagh, the largest fresh water lake in the UK or Ireland. The market and post-town in the parish is Moneymore.

DNA testing has proven to be so effective in locating the origins of families that we can now point to Artrea, Co. Derry as the origin of both McMurtry CF 211 and CF 203. However, there are other sources that support the Artrea (Co. Derry / Co. Tyrone) origin.

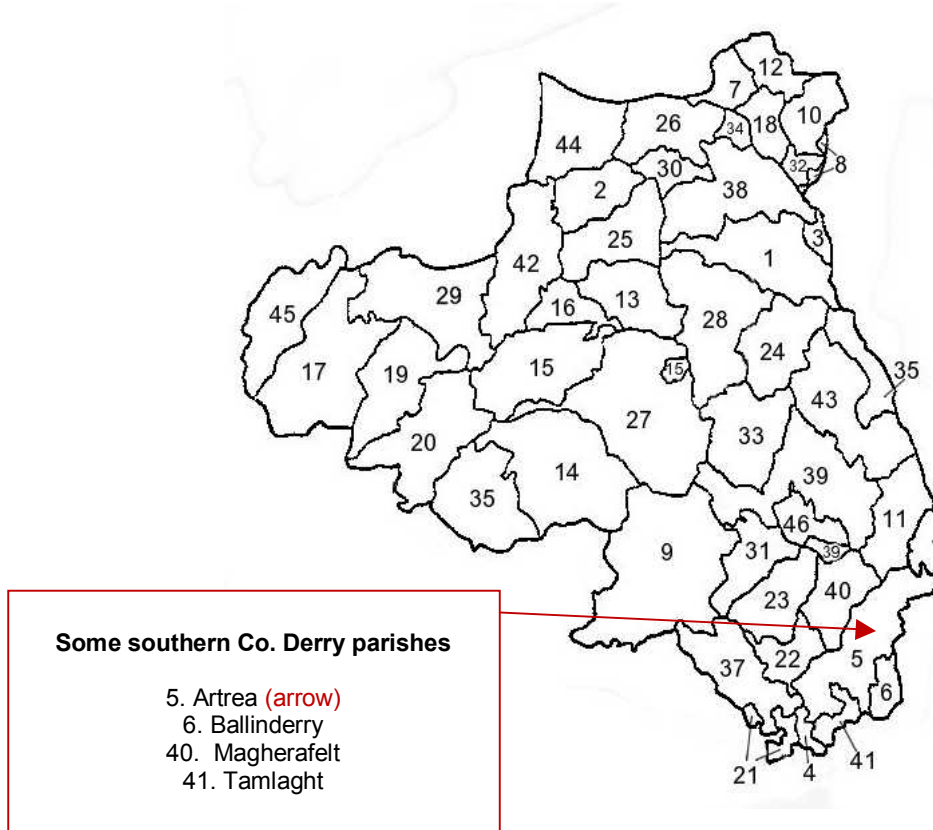
Ireland & Northern Ireland



A map of Co. Tyrone parishes with Artrea being one which is partly in Co. Tyrone and partly in Co. Derry



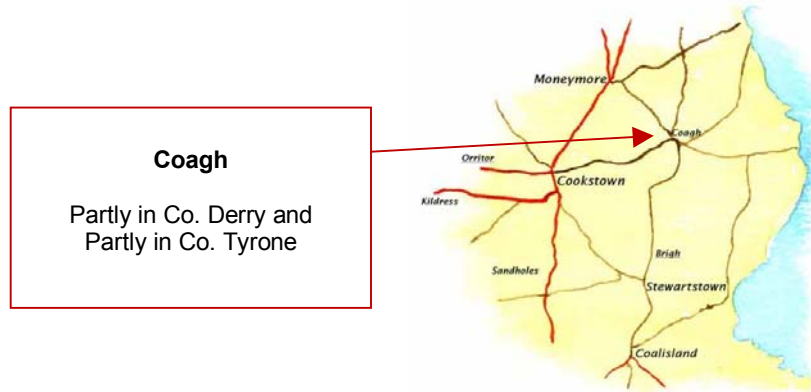
Map showing the parishes of Co. Derry and the location of Artrea



Wilsons of Co. Derry

Nancy Wilson's brother Robert Wilson settled in Huntley Township, next to March Township, with his wife, Fannie, in 1828. Nancy and Robert were the children of David Cunningham Wilson and Mary Wiley. In her book *To and From the Ottawa Valley*, Muriel Wilson Beldean indicates that David Wilson was born in the village of "Coche (pronounced Coke)" in Co. Derry. Since there is no village or town named "Coche" in Co. Derry, nor anywhere in Ireland, it appears she was referring to the village of Coagh (also pronounced kook, from the Irish: *An Uiach* meaning "cup-shaped hollow"). Coagh is a village partly in Co. Tyrone and partly in Co. Derry and is in the civil parish of Tamlaght (see parish # 41 in the above map of Co. Derry).

Map showing the distance from Coagh to Moneymore, Co. Derry (3.0 miles) and Cookstown, Co. Tyrone (5.9 miles). Coagh is 9 miles from the town of Magherafelt, Co. Derry.



**Below is the bridge in Coagh crossing Ballinderry River;
on the left is County Londonderry; on the right is County Tyrone.
The river has formed the border between the two counties since the creation of Co. Derry.**



Co. Derry vs. Co. Londonderry

Co. Derry is used, rather than Co. Londonderry, as this is the way it appears on Robert and Fannie Wilson's tombstones. It's also the name used in the oral history provided by McMurtry descendants currently living outside Ottawa. Furthermore, Muriel Wilson Beldean, a Wilson descendent, uses "Co. Derry" in her book *To and From the Ottawa Valley*.

David Wilson, Flax Grower, Artrea, Co. Derry

Robert Wilson was a weaver and, according to Beldean, he came to Upper Canada with this weaving equipment (weaving loom, spinning wheel, etc.), which would have been received as part of an incentive plan for farmers to grow flax.

"In 1796 the Irish Linen Board published a list of almost 60,000 individuals who had received awards for planting a specified acreage of flax. Those who planted one acre were awarded 4 spinning-wheels, and those growing 5 acres were awarded a loom." Ulster was the centre of the linen industry. "The two counties with the highest number of awards were Donegal and Tyrone." Often a family business, we find David Wilson of Artrea, County Derry listed on the above 1796 FLAX GROWERS LIST. Given Robert's possession of the kind of weaving equipment awarded, there is a very high chance his father David Wilson was a flax grower, earned these tools for the family, and is the person on the 1796 FLAX GROWERS LIST.

Wiley family of Magherafelt

Nancy and Robert Wilson's mother, Mary Wiley, was born in the small village of Coolshinnny (Coolshinnie) in Magherafelt Parish, Co. Derry, which is just 9 miles from Coagh, and is the adjacent parish to Artrea. According to the terms used in the RELIGIOUS CENSUS OF IRELAND 1776, we find three groups of families in the parish of Magherafelt : 1) Protestants; 2) Dissenters; 3) Papists. On the list of Dissenters we find a Robert Wiley and a John McMurdey.

We should assume that upon her marriage to David Wilson, Mary Wiley left her family home in Coolshinnny and took up residence with her husband, most likely in the parish of Artrea, Co. Derry, as the Flax records above suggest. Apart from the Wileys and the John McMurdey (who may or may not be a McMurtry), we have not found another connection between McMurtry CF 203 and Magherafelt. In the early stages of DNA testing, the Magherafelt reference was useful in that it placed McMurtry CF 203 in southern Co. Derry in close proximity to McMurtry CF 211, rather than the northern Co. Derry parishes such as Aghadowey, Mascoquin or Coleraine where other McMurtry families were located.

James M'Mootry, Flax Grower, Artrea, Co. Derry

Also on the same 1796 FLAX GROWERS LIST we find James M'Mootry of Artrea, Co. Derry. It was not uncommon to find McMurtry spelled in many different ways such as M'Murty, M'Mootry, Mcmurtry, etc. This is a significant record in that it places a James McMurtry (with variant spelling) actually in Artrea, Co. Derry, prior to the family's migration. So, if M'Mootry is McMurtry, then we potentially have the fathers of both James McMurtry (then age 2) and Nancy Wilson (then age 3) both growing flax in Artrea parish, Co. Derry.

Conyngham of Spring Hill, Co. Derry

The Conyngham family had come from Ayrshire in Scotland in about 1611 and were granted lands under James I's Plantation of Ulster in County Armagh. They purchased the Springhill estate, which is on the townland of Ballindrum, near Moneymore, County Derry, around 1630. The estate passed to George Butle in 1721 who thereupon adopted the name Butle Conyngham. Under the terms of the Plantation Grant, he constructed the village of the above-mentioned Coagh in about 1755, naming the main square "Hanover Square" in deference to King George II.

John McMurtry of Co. Tyrone

The McMurtry Clan Family Records regards John McMurtry (1803-1887) as McMurtry CF 203. He was a farmer in March Township who married Mary Morgan from Co. Tipperary. They lived a few properties down from James and Nancy McMurtry until 1835 when they moved to Middlesex County, near London, Ontario. John McMurtry's death certificate shows he was born in County Tyrone, Ireland. Carleton University Professor and Ottawa Valley settlement expert Bruce Elliott believes John and James McMurtry were likely brothers, because: a) their names appear together on petitions; b) they lived close to each other in March Township.

For most of its history, Upper Canada was a staunch British colony. Like George Butle-Conyngham naming Coach's main square "Hanover Square," both James McMurtry and John McMurtry named a son George, likely in honour of George I, II, III and IV.

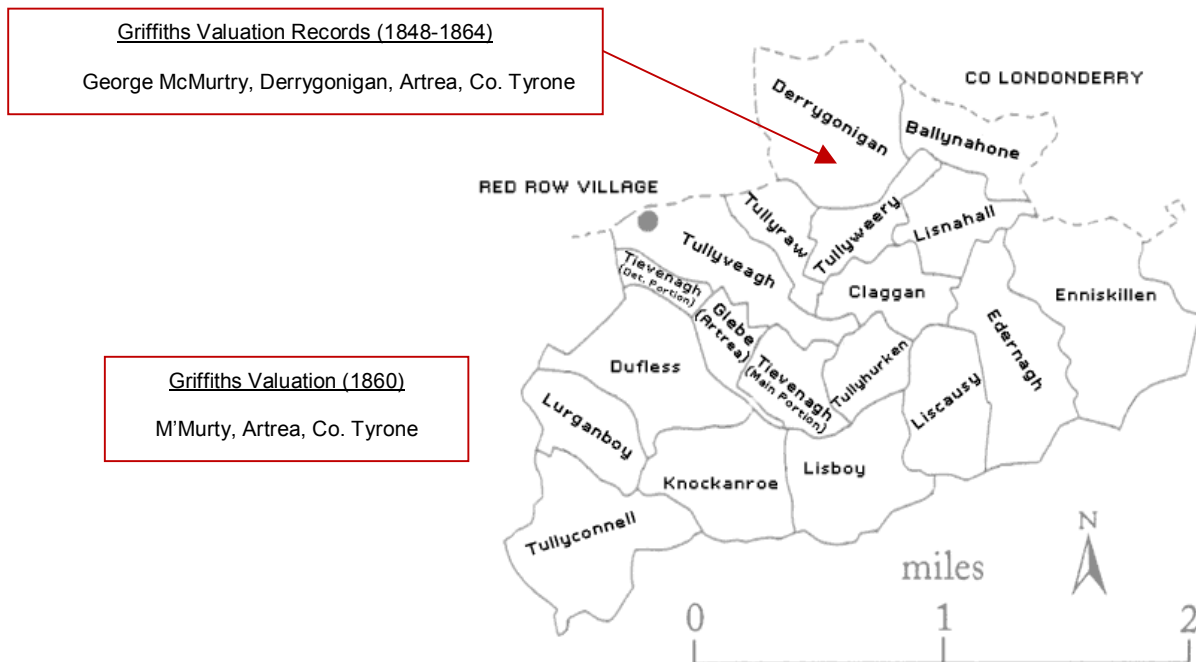
George McMurtry, Derrygonigan, Artrea, Co. Tyrone

GRIFFITHS VALUATION 1848-1864 for Artrea, County Tyrone lists George McMurtry of the townland of Derrygonigan. This townland is directly on the border of Co. Tyrone and Co. Derry.

We also have an 1860 GRIFFITHS VALUATION listing M'Murty of Artrea, Co. Tyrone. This and the above 1848-1864 GRIFFITHS VALUATION may be the same record or different altogether.

Either way, these two sources place at least one (maybe two) McMurtry families in Co. Tyrone, and, more importantly, in Artrea, a parish shared by the McMurtrys on the Co. Derry side of Artrea.

Map of Artrea Parish, Co. Tyrone



Conclusion

The 99% related DNA match between McMurtry (CF 203) and McMurtry (CF 211) of the parish of Artrea, County Derry, along with the supporting evidence detailed in this report, tells us that CF 203 spent an unknown number of years in the parish of Artrea before sailing for Upper Canada in 1823.

We have records for McMurtrys on both sides of this unique and interesting parish and counties. We have a close association in Upper Canada between John McMurtry of Co. Tyrone and James McMurtry of Artrea, Co. Derry. Given the number of shared parishes and the arbitrary border between Co. Derry and Co. Tyrone, there is a very good chance that the McMurtrys on both sides of Artrea parish are part of the same McMurtry CF 203 | 211 family.

McMurtry CF 203 | 211 is believed to have settled in Ireland from Scotland and there may have been internal migration within the province of Ulster. The next McMurtry family closest to CF 203 | 211 is McMurtry CF 206 of the parish of Kilrea, Co. Derry. This family matched 22 / 25 markers in DNA testing with CF 203. Of all the McMurtrys of Co. Derry, CF 206 in Kilrea also happens to be the closest geographically; Kilrea is 20 miles from Moneymore.

Next Steps

Ongoing DNA testing suggests these Artrea McMurtry families share an Ayrshire origin in the parishes of Dailly and Kirkmichael. Alexander McMurtry's branch of the McMurtry CF203 | 211 family left Co. Derry briefly for Maybole, Ayrshire, Scotland, in the 1840's before migrating and settling in Boston, Massachusetts, USA. Dailly is 8 miles from Maybole and Kirkmichael 3 miles from Maybole. Further DNA results should open new avenues to explore the Scottish roots of McMurtry CF 203 | 211 and potentially McMurtry CF 206 of Kilrea, Co. Derry.

Appendix on next page

Advertisement for Lough Neagh

This shows the Ballinderry River, Magherafelt, Moneymore, Coagh, Spring Hill House as well as the other counties on Lough Neagh

